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ACHOMAWI MYTHS

COLLECTED BY JEREMIAH CURTIN; EDITED BY ROLAND B. DIXON

[NOTE.— The following myths were collected by Jeremiah Curtin for the Bureau of American Ethnology. They were placed in my hands by the Editor for preparation for insertion in this Journal; and in so doing, I have made no changes other than to give the English names for the various characters, and to add a word or two here and there, where the original manuscript was obscure or imperfect because of hasty copying. One myth has been omitted from the series, as it is only a brief version of the Loon-Woman myth already published in this Journal, vol. xxi, p. 165. — R. B. DIXON.]

I. PINE-MARTEN MARRIES THE BEAD SISTERS

THE two Bead girls were sent by their mother to marry Cocoon-Man's son. He was wrapped up and put away. He had never been outside, and had never eaten anything.

The Bead sisters came from a place far off in the ocean. They came on the water, brought by the wind, and they always sang the song of the wind. It took just one day for them to reach Cocoon-Man's house. His daughters liked the two girls and gave them food. All the men were out hunting, and the daughters sent the two girls into the sweat-house and told them to sit by Pine-Marten's bed.

They could not get Cocoon-Man's son, the one their mother had sent them for. Cocoon-Man would not listen to it, so they took Pine-Marten, and stayed three days with him. At the end of that time they wanted to go home. Pine-Marten asked all his people for blankets and shells to give his wives to carry home. They started. Cocoon-Man made a trail to the west to walk on. He sent his words out west, put his hand out west and east to make a trail, and immediately it was open. Cocoon-Man sat on the ground in the centre, and made a rainbow reaching from the place where he sat to the home of the girls.

The company started. Weasel went with Pine-Marten up to the top of the rainbow, and the women went under it. While they were travelling, Weasel made a flute out of a reed, and made sweet music that sounded through the world and was heard by every living being.

The two sisters walked on the lower rainbow, the reflection, and reached home safely. Next year Pine-Marten had children. He made a boy of bead-shells, and from a round shell which he threw into his wife a girl was born. In the spring of the second year, he came back on the same trail that Cocoon-Man had made. His children grew very fast. Then he left his boy at home, and sent his girl to her grandmother in the ocean. The boy stayed with Cocoon-Man. The third year he had two sons and two daughters.

Now Pine-Marten's wife took one son and one daughter to her mother

in the ocean; and Pine-Marten kept one son and one daughter, and they lived with him at Fall River.

2. KANGAROO-RAT RACES WITH COYOTE AND OTHERS

Two Kangaroo-Rat women, a mother and her daughter, lived near Coyote's place. Now the people at this place hunted all the time, but never sent any meat to the old woman. She said, "It is best to get a man to hunt for us. I do not like these people; they are too proud." Her daughter said, "I will run a race with these men, and I'll bet myself against a man. I'll win and have a husband."

The next morning the girl went over to Coyote's house when the men were just through breakfast. She went on top of the sweat-house and called out, "I want to run a race with one of your boys; to-day I feel like running."

Coyote said, "All right. The chief men always run first. I will run with you first." He went out, and they started towards the north, and ran until he fell down dead. The girl came home, and that night Cocoon-Man said, "I know what she is trying to do. When women want to marry us, they always kill us first. These are bad women."

Next day she came to the house, and asked again to run with a man. Badger ran with her. He ran northward, turned to come back, reached a mountain-top, and died. Next day Silver-Fox went out to run with her. He ran far to the north, came back halfway, and fell dead. Ground-Squirrel ran, came halfway home, and died. Kangaroo-Rat was coming home slowly. She came more slowly each time. First she had always returned in the middle of the morning, but this time she was back about noon. The mother thought, "My daughter will fail. I am afraid she gets tired too easily." The girl ran the next day with Wolf, but he died, and she reached home still later.

Now she had killed all but three men. Pine-Marten ran the next day. They kept together. The girl thought he was going to win; but when he came into the valley and almost reached home, he fell dead. The last men left were Weasel and his brother from the mountain. They were angry because Pine-Marten had been killed. They were going to take an otter-skin quiver. One of the brothers was to rest in it; so when the other became tired, this one would jump out and carry the tired one. When then the other one had rested and was fresh, he would jump out and take his turn. Thus they would run and carry each other alternately. The two looked just alike, and the girl thought she was running with one. The mountain brother of Weasel sang. They ran near the girl all the time. They found the bones of Coyote, picked them up, and put them in the otter-skin quiver. They came to the other bones and picked them up also. While they were picking up the bones, the girl, thinking she had beaten Weasel, turned and looked

back. He called out, "Don't look back. I can outrun you. Girls cannot run fast." She was frightened at his words, and ran on as fast as possible. When one brother was tired, the other came out, and the first went into the quiver. Weasel called out, "Run fast, I am going to beat you." Now the girl began to give out. While Weasel was running, she thought she noticed a difference in the song, and looked back. He called out, "Go on fast!" It was near sundown now. The old woman saw them coming. The two Weasel brothers as one, reached the sweat-house first. The young woman went with them to their sweat-house, and did not go back to her mother. That evening they put the bones in water, and the dead all came to life. The girl went in the morning to her mother's house to get roots, and the men went hunting. She always sent plenty of meat to her mother after that.

3. THE BUZZARD BROTHERS AND WOOD-WORM

Two Buzzard brothers lived together Near Pit River lived Wood-Worm, the last of his race. All the other Wood-Worm people had been killed by Western men. Wood-Worm lived alone one winter; and when the winter was past, he began to think of going west to see what kind of a place it was where his people had been lost. He thought four or five days before starting, and got his weapons ready. Then he sent Cottontail-Rabbit to the Buzzard brothers to tell them of all he intended to do, and to say from him, "I'll come and visit you in two or three days." The brothers said, "All right. We are glad that you are coming." Both brothers were married, each having a wife and a mother-in-law.

The Buzzard brothers got ready to go on the journey. They made flint knives out of their own feathers. These flint knives stuck out through their buckskin dresses: and when they were good-humored the knives were smooth like feathers; when angry, they stuck out like knives, and killed every man they touched.

On the third day the Buzzard brothers were looking for Wood-Worm. They did not have to wait long, for he came early. All were glad, smoked, took breakfast, and then set out, reaching Sun's house about sundown. The people there were astonished, and said, "We thought all these men were killed." — "No," said Sun, "there are more yet; they keep back the best. These that have just come are the smartest. They are hard to kill." Sun sent his daughter to marry Wood-Worm, a very fine-looking man. He went to where the girls had fixed a place for him to sit.

The Buzzard brothers did not like to enter Sun's house; but as Wood-Worm went in, they followed. Sun was very kind to the two brothers, and said, "I am glad to see you, my boys, and I am glad to have my daughters marry." Then he said, turning to Wood-Worm, "My son-in-law, take good care of me. I like my daughters to have a husband." The Buzzard brothers were very angry. They wanted to fight immedi-

ately, for they knew that old man Sun was trying to fool them. Wood-Worm listened to the old man in silence, filled his pipe, and smoked.

Sun's wife was cooking acorn-mush, salmon and other fish, for supper. She brought plenty of food to her daughters, and the young men all ate heartily. They went to bed. In the morning a great many people came to the house, wanting to sweat. They brought wood, made a great fire, and sweated. When they had half finished, the Buzzard brothers stuck out their flint knives, which cut and killed half the people.

That day after breakfast they had to play with a big disk. The brothers were told to call for the game, and did so. They went out. "Bet your brother against ten men," said a spirit-guardian to the elder Buzzard. The young man began the game. Wood-Worm all this time was in Sun's house, with his wife. Buzzard bet his brother against ten men. The spirit-guardian said, "You roll first." Buzzard rolled, after putting up the disk with the help of his brother. Buzzard rolled the disk rather slowly; and the other side stopped it, then sent it back very fast. But Buzzard had something like a brake, with which he stopped and caught the disk.

The second time Buzzard rolled the disk very hard. It went so fast that they could not stop it, and lost their ten men. They lost three times. Thus they lost thirty men in all. Buzzard killed the thirty men, cutting them up with his flint feathers, which acted like knives.

Next morning they played with the disk again. Buzzard won twice and killed twenty men. Then they ran a foot-race. The racers went to the starting-post. On the way back, Buzzard let others go ahead for awhile. Behind him Thunder was running, who tried to kill him; but Buzzard dodged, sometimes up, sometimes down, and at last he killed Thunder, and then killed a good many others. All were angry, and a great fight followed. While the race and fight were going on, Wood-Worm had gathered all the bones of his friends into a bag, and said to the Buzzard brothers, "You go on killing. I will go home."

The Buzzard brothers fought the western people, they followed them eastward for a good while, but at last they had to go back. Wood-Worm reached home, put all the bones in water in the sweat-house, and all came to life again.

4. THE HOUSE OF SILVER-FOX

When Silver-Fox left this world, he said to his sweat-house, "Nobody shall ever come in here," and he left a strong wind there to guard the place. No one dares go near this place, for a whirlwind blows up out of it, makes a noise like thunder, and only shamans can go near; but whoever enters is immediately turned to stone inside. Wolf and Silver-Fox left their power of wind there. Even now, wolves will catch people that come near; and whoever gets inside, turns to white rock.

Once a great shaman dreamed of a wolf that was in that sweat-house. He went in. As soon as he got inside, the wind stopped. He went around inside and vomited blood. He said it was an immense sweat-house, as much as a mile across inside. When he came out, he fell down nearly dead. Another shaman cured him. He had seen nothing inside but men turned to stone. Next night this shaman's hair turned as white as snow.

5. FISH-HAWK AND HIS DAUGHTER

Fish-Hawk lived down at Pit River. When Sun travelled in winter, he left his daughter at home, but he carried her about with him in summer. Sun did not want his daughter to marry any poor person, but a great man, like Pine-Marten, Wolf, or Coyote. Fish-Hawk got angry at Sun because he talked in this way of poor people, so he started and went down to the ocean, to Sun's place, and slipped into the sweat-house. It was winter now, and Sun's daughter was put away inside the house in a basket. Fish-Hawk stole her, carried her on his back to Coyote's house, and hid her away. He made the journey in one night.

Next morning Sun could not find his daughter, and did not know where she had gone. That morning Fish-Hawk took the basket with the woman in it, and put it away under the rocks in muddy water, to hide it so that Sun could not see and could not find his daughter.

Sun searched everywhere in the air and on the ground, but could not find her. Then he hired all men who were good divers or swimmers to hunt in the water, for he thought she was hidden in the water. All searched until they came to Pit River. One would search part of the way, then another. Kingfisher was the last man to go in search of her. He went along slowly to look where the water was muddy. At last he thought he saw just a bit of something under the water. Then he went over the place carefully again and again.

Many people were going along the river, watching these men looking for Sun's daughter. Kingfisher filled his pipe, smoked, and blew on the water to make it clear, for he was a great shaman. Then he went up in the air and came down over the place. The people were all excited, and thought surely he would find something. He came along slowly, and sat and smoked again, and blew the smoke over the water. Then he rose, rolled up his pipe and tobacco, and put them away. Then he took a long pole, stood over the water, pushed his pole down deep, and speared with it until he got hold of the basket and pulled it out. Old Sun came, untied the basket, took his daughter out, washed her, then put her back. He paid each of the men he had hired. Part of their pay was in shells.

Kingfisher said that it was Fish-Hawk who had hidden the basket. Sun put the basket on his back and started home. He was so happy to get his daughter back that he did no harm to Fish-Hawk for stealing her.